

THE NEW ORDERS OF

His MAJESTY's Justices of the Peace,

For putting the Laws in Execution against all SEMINARIES, CONVENTICLES and unlawfull Meetings.

PREAS by a Statute made in the Seventeenth year of the Reign of his Majesty that now is amongst other things it is enacted, that all such Persons, who take upon them to Preach in any unlawful Assembly, Conventicle or Meeting, under colour or pretence of any Exercise of Religion, contrary to the Laws and Statutes of this Kingdom, shall not at any time come within five miles of a Corporation, nor any person teach School, who shall not frequent Divine Service established by the Laws of this Kingdom, as by the said Statute more at large appeareth, under the penalty of forty pounds for every offence. And whereas by another Statute made in the Two and twentieth year of the Reign of his said Majesty, it is amongst other things enacted, That if any person of the age of sixteen years and upwards, shall be present at any Assembly, Meeting, or Conventicle, under colour or pretence of any Exercise of Religion, in other manner than according to the Liturgy and practice of the Church of England, where there shall be assembled five persons or more, over and besides those of the Household: And every person who shall take upon him to preach or teach in any such Meeting, Assembly, and Conventicle, shall forfeit for every such offence, as in the said Statute is provided: And whereas Papists, Seminary Priests and Jesuits may likewise in Conventicles and Schools, withdraw his Majesties Subjects from their Obedience, and corrupt them both in their Religion and duty to his Majesty; And whereas the Justices are informed, that divers Houses have been lately created and built within this County, for such Conventicles and Meetings, and frequented by great numbers of persons inhabiting in the said County and others, to the great disturbance of the Government, and may be of dangerous consequence, and if not timely suppressed, such publick Conventicles not being permitted in any Christian Country; no, nor in these very Countries where most Religions are tolerated; And whereas the Justices are likewise informed, that divers persons keep Schools within the said County contrary to the said Statute, and other Laws by whom ill principles will be planted in young Children, which will grow up with them, and thereby continue the Separation and Division which is in this Kingdom, to the certain ruine and destruction of his Majesties Peace and the established Government. Now for the prevention of the mischiefs which may arise by the said Conventicles and Schools, the Justices are of opinion that the said Statutes of Seventeenth and Two and twentieth of this King ought to be put in due Execution, and do esteeme themselves obliged by the Oaths which they have taken, to see them duly executed; And that they may do, all that in them lies, in order thereunto, They do declare that all House-keepers within this County who keep Alehouses and other publick houses for Entertainment by vertue of any License from the Justices of the Peace of this County, and shall not go to their Parish Church and receive the Sacrament according to the practice in the Church of England, and shall after the Sixteenth day of February 1681, go to any such Conventicle as aforesaid, contrary to the said Statutes, shall have their Licences taken from them, and the Houses of Entertainment suppressed; and if any such for the future happen to be licensed, as soon as they shall be discovered, they shall likewise be suppressed. The Justices further declare, that if the Church-wardens and Overseers of the Poor, shall dispose of any of the Parish money by way of Pension or otherwise to pay people who frequent Conventicles, and do not come to their Parish Church, and receive the Sacrament there (except in case of sickness and necessity to be allowed by a Justice of Peace) the money paid to such people shall not be allowed by the said Justices in the Accounts of the Church-wardens and Overseers of the Poor, because such persons who never come to the Parish Church ought not to be reckoned of the Parish. The Justices further declare, that they will appoint some sitting persons to prosecute all Offenders against the said Statutes, such publick houses being the place where Factious Persons meet to keep Clubs, and consult together how to disturb the Government. It is Ordered by this Court, that the aforesaid Declaration made in Sessions be published, that all persons concerned may take notice of it.

Whereas by an Order made by the Kings most Excellent Majesty in Council, dated the Fourteenth day of December last past; wherein his Majesty is pleased to express his Resolution, and doth require that the Justices of the Peace of this County should use their utmost Endeavour to suppress all Conventicles and unlawful Meetings, under colour and pretence of Exercise of Religion, in other manner than according to the Liturgy and practice of the Church of England; and that the Laws be put in Execution against them both in City and Country: It is therefore Ordered by his Majesties Justices of the Peace, in Obedience to his Majesties Command, That the Laws for the Suppressing such Meetings and Conventicles be put in due Execution: And that the said Justices will use their utmost Endeavour to suppress all Conventicles and unlawful Meetings upon pretence of Religious Worship, within this County. And to the end this good Work may be effectually performed, It is further Ordered, That Warrants be made and directed to the Constables, Headboroughs, Tything-men, Churchwardens, and Overseers for the Poor, of every Parish and Precinct within this County, by Name commanding them and every of them, within their Parishes, Divisions and Limits, that they and every of them, do make a diligent Enquiry of all the Conventicles and unlawful Meetings, in their several Parishes and Precincts; and that they do take the Christian-Name, Sir-Name, and place of Abode, of every person that hath preached within a Month last past, or shall preach any time before the Sixteenth day of February 1681, in any Conventicle or unlawful Meeting, and also the Christian and Sir-Name, with the additions of the most considerable persons that frequent the said Conventicles; and on Thursday the 16th of February 1681, they do make a true Return in Writing of the Preachers in such Conventicle, and Conventicles, most considerable persons that frequent the same, together with the day of the Month when, and the place where such Conventicles or unlawful Meetings were held; to the Sessions to be held at Hicks-Hall in St. John-Street: And that the respective Officers or some of them do prove the same upon Oath, to the end that every such Preacher in Conventicles and unlawful Meetings, and such considerable persons as aforesaid, may be convicted according to Law. And it is further ordered that the said Justices do by their said Warrant require the Constables of, and within their respective Divisions, forthwith, and so from time to time to assemble the Headboroughs, Churchwardens, and Overseers of the Poor within their several Constablewicks, to agree together for putting this present Order in execution; and that when the Officers before mentioned, or any of them, do or shall repair to any Place or Meeting-house where such Conventicles are held, as aforesaid, and demand the Names of the Preacher or persons there assembled, and they or any of them shall refuse to tell the said Officer or Officers their true Christian-Names, Surnames, and Place of Abode, that then the said Officer or Officers, or some of them, do immediately apprehend such person or persons so refusing, and bring them before the next or some other of his Majesties Justices of the Peace of this County. And it is further Ordered by this Court, that in case any of the Officers above mentioned meet with any resistance, by the shutting or barring up any Doors or Gates of any house or place where such unlawful Conventicles or Meetings are held, that then in such case the said Constables, Headboroughs Churchwardens, and Overseers of the Poor, or any of them, do, and they are hereby required, to break open such Doors or Gates, to the intent such unlawful Meetings as aforesaid may be proceeded against according to Law.